

T-2.1
SWANA TECHNICAL POLICY
PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP

I. BACKGROUND

Product stewardship is defined as the act of minimizing the health, safety, environmental and social impacts, and maximizing economic benefits of a product and its packaging throughout all lifecycle stages. The producer of the product has the greatest ability to minimize adverse impacts, but other stakeholders, such as suppliers, retailers, and consumers, also play a role. Stewardship can be either voluntary or required by law.* Product stewardship calls on product manufacturers and others in the supply chain to take on new responsibilities to reduce adverse impacts beginning with design of their products through funding or operating and promoting programs to enable product reuse or recycling at the end of their lives. All participants in a product's life cycle, including retailers, consumers and waste managers, have important roles to play in developing the most workable and cost-effective solutions and participation from all stakeholders should be obtained. Governments have the important role of establishing policies and programs to encourage and oversee product stewardship and create fair and equitable systems for product management. The objective of product stewardship is to reduce, reuse and recycle (in that order) as much of the waste stream as possible while minimizing environmental and health impacts.

Product stewardship programs should encourage manufacturers, importers and/or retailers, with support, oversight and regulatory requirements (if necessary) from governments, to minimize the impacts of their products on the environment and human health by:

1. Continually improving the design, manufacture, handling and disposal of products;
2. Establishing and/or funding programs to collect, process and reuse or recycle products when they are discarded; and
3. Measuring the improvements with reasonable goals and timelines so that policies and programs are achieved.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guiding principles for the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) and its members to use as they collaborate with manufacturers, importers, retailers, consumers, regulators, legislators and waste managers in developing programs to safely, cost-effectively and appropriately manage products throughout their useful lives. This policy focuses primarily on the solid waste management aspects of product stewardship, i.e. the actions taken to reduce the impacts of disposal and to encourage the reuse and recycling of such products.

* Definition developed by the **Product Stewardship Institute**, the **Product Policy Institute** and the **California Product Stewardship Council**.

III. SWANA'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP

A. Responsibility

Industry (designers, manufacturers, importers, and retailers of products or product components) should be encouraged to reduce product impacts, with the oversight and regulatory requirements (if necessary) of governments and cooperation of consumers.

B. Implementation Priorities

A priority for product stewardship programs should be products that, due to the materials they contain or other characteristics, require special collection, handling, recycling or disposal procedures that are different from the conventional solid waste management practices carried out or arranged by local governments. Implementation of product stewardship should not create new or duplicative programs that preempt existing programs run by or for local governments but should support or expand such programs in cooperation with and oversight by the local government, unless said government agrees to let industry operate and fund the program.

C. Internalize Costs

All product lifecycle costs, such as the use of resources during manufacturing, reducing health, safety, and environmental impacts and managing products at the end of life, should be recognized and reflected in the total product cost.

The costs of managing any product at its end-of-life should be shared by manufacturers, importers, retailers and consumers and the program should be efficient, cost-effective and easy to use by consumers.

D. Incentives for More Environmentally Sound Products and Sustainable Management Practices

Product stewardship programs should create incentives for manufacturers or importers to design and produce products that:

- are made using less energy and materials;
- reduce pollutants;
- generate less waste (through reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting); and
- use less energy to operate.

Programs should also create incentives for manufacturers or importers to develop sustainable and environmentally-sound systems to collect, reuse and recycle or dispose of products at the end of their lives.

E. Flexible Management Strategies

Manufacturers and importers, working with local and other levels of government and public and private solid waste managers, should have flexibility in determining how to address disposal impacts and recycling and reduction goals most effectively. Their performance should be evaluated against measurable, mutually agreed upon goals. Voluntary stewardship programs should be encouraged and facilitated. However, should industry not implement or support programs or performance goals voluntarily, it may be necessary for governments to legislate such requirements. In any case, timelines, ideally developed cooperatively by industry and

governments, should be reasonable and achievable so that new methods for managing materials, including funding, are in place before restrictions are placed on the old ones. If implementation of a funding formula and/or diversion program is not being implemented quickly enough in the opinion of the jurisdictional government, that government may legislate the requirements.

F. Roles and Relationships

Manufacturers, importers and retailers should:

- Support and fund convenient, accessible, voluntary stewardship programs, including public education and market development for recycled products, ideally based upon the mutually agreed-upon performance goals;
- in conjunction with (but not contingent on) funding, assist existing program operators with improving material handling efficiencies, with a view to cost savings; and
- where programs exist, work with local governments to support, promote, improve and expand programs to collect, process and recycle products, unless said government agrees to let industry operate and fund the program.

Governments have a vital role in:

- providing oversight, and technical assistance;
- developing measurable performance goals with input of all stakeholders, ensuring community and public needs are met and programs work harmoniously with existing solid waste collection, processing recycling and disposal programs;
- addressing regulatory barriers, providing regulatory incentives, disincentives or restrictions to ensure a level playing field to encourage the entire product supply chain to participate;
- providing information to consumers to enable them to make responsible purchasing, reuse, recycling and disposal decisions;
- ensuring programs are protective of the environment and public health, transparent and accountable to the public; and
- prohibiting the international shipment of discarded products to facilities that do not comply with standards for worker safety, public health and the environment, and to countries that do not have regulatory programs to enforce such standards.

IV. SWANA's ROLE

SWANA, as a major association for solid waste professionals, will promote the product stewardship principles with this policy as guidance in its dissemination of information and training and in its advocacy role as a voice for the profession.

Approved by the International Board on
March 27, 2014.



Richard Allen, International Secretary
Dated March 28, 2014